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SUBJECT: DAILY SUMMARY OF JAPANESE PRESS 08/21/08

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- (1) Defense Minister Hayashi: No logical reason for moving replacement facility offshore

OKINAWA TIMES (Page 2) (Full)  
August 21, 2008

After meeting with Okinawa Gov. Hirokazu Nakaima, Defense Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi held a press conference yesterday afternoon at a hotel in Naha City, Okinawa Prefecture, where he visited for the first time since taking office. In the press meeting, Hayashi reiterated that without a logical reason it would be difficult to move the planned replacement facility for the U.S. Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station offshore from the government's original plan.

Asked by reporters about his impression of Okinawa, Hayashi said: "I felt anew that four U.S. military bases are concentrated here." He

then stressed: "The realignment of U.S. bases in Japan is a chance. Taking this opportunity, we must endeavor to implement the realignment."

Regarding his meetings with Nakaima and Nago Mayor Yoshikazu Shimabukuro, Hayashi said with confidence: "In order to work together, we reached a consensus on forging relations. I think we have the same position."

The Hayashi-Shimabukuro meeting on the morning of Aug. 20 was closed, except for its opening. In addition to moving the alternate facility offshore, Shimabukuro made four requests, including that local companies be given priority in placing orders and that a portion of Camp Hansen's land be continued to be used. It has been decided that the land in question will be gradually returned to Okinawa.

According to the Defense Ministry, Shimabukuro said he would like to engage in energetic consultations on an agreement on land use.

Shimabukuro, after the meeting, expressed his desire, saying:

"The working team has been created. We will promote discussion in detail, while acknowledging each other's positions. I think we will discuss matters in the relocation committee."

In Hayashi's luncheon meeting with the heads of municipalities in northern Okinawa, Takeshi Gibu, the chairman of the association of the municipalities in northern Okinawa and mayor of Kin Town, called on Hayashi to give priority to residents in the northern region when

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hiring employees for the base.

Hayashi viewed areas around Futenma No. 2 Elementary School, Futenma Air Station, and the takeoff and landing of FA-18s from Kakazu Takadai Park. He received a briefing from Okinawa Defense Bureau chief Ro Manabe on aerial surveillance and the location of Okinawa International University, where a CH-53 once crashed.

Regarding the fact that he had not set a meeting with Ginowan Mayor Yoichi Iha, Hayashi in the press conference said: "Due to time constraints, I was unable to set any meeting with him. It is important to exchange views with various people, seizing every opportunity. I will look into the (possibility of meeting with Iha) in the future."

(2) Japan providing free fuel that is purchased from U.S.; Checkbook contributions evident

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 3) (Abridged)  
August 21, 2008

The Self-Defense Forces, which have been providing fuel to vessels of other countries in the Indian Ocean free of charge, have purchased fuel from the U.S. military for their airlift mission in Iraq. The refueling operation at sea started for supporting the United States, which began attacks in Afghanistan in retaliation for 9/11. "Charging fees is an international norm. Providing anything free is unusual," a senior Defense Ministry official said. What does the Japanese public, who is suffering under soaring oil prices, think of such services?

The Maritime Self-Defense Force provided naval vessels of the United States and other countries with fuel worth 22.4 billion yen free of charge under the Antiterrorism Special Measures Law that was in force for the six years from 2001 to 2007. People still remember that a U.S. oiler was suspected to have diverted its fuel from Japan to the war in Iraq.

The MSDF provided over 800 million yen worth of fuel to a total of 40 foreign oilers between January and July 31 this year under the new antiterrorism law (refueling law). Pakistan tops the list at a total of 16 occasions, followed by France, Germany, Canada, the United States, Britain and New Zealand. The MSDF has provided free fuel not only to Pakistan, which is subject to Japan's official

development assistance (ODA), but also to industrialized countries as well.

When an MSDF training fleet visited a French port in July 2005, it received 30 million yen worth of fuel from the country in return for providing free fuel to a total of over 50 French naval vessels in the Indian Ocean. That was the only occasion the MSDF has received free fuel.

Meanwhile, the Air Self-Defense Force contingent in Kuwait has purchased fuel for its Iraq airlift mission from the U.S. military, which has fuel storage tanks at the same base, in accordance with the Japan-U.S. Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA).

The antiterrorism law, refueling law, and Iraq measures law have articles allowing Japan to provide other countries with supplies free of charge.

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A Defense Ministry International Cooperation Division source said of the reason why the article was applied only to the refueling operation in the Indian Ocean and not to the airlift mission in Iraq: "It reflects the decision based on Japan's contribution policy." What was the decision?

The antiterrorism law was enacted only after 25 days of Diet deliberations following the U.S. and British forces' air strikes on Afghanistan in October 2001. Asked his view on the law in a Lower House Budget Committee session on October 10, 2007, Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda admitted Japan's "support for the war," saying: "The United States took action for self-defense following the enormously shocking 9/11 attacks. We were in a position to cooperate with it."

The United States' war in self-defense ended with the establishment of the interim Afghan government on December 22, 2001, but Japan's refueling operation has continued and expanded to deal with 11 countries.

The government has defined the refueling mission as part of the country's support for (the U.S. military's) Operation Enduring Freedom Maritime Interdiction Operation (OEF-MIO). The U.S. Navy, which has been leading the operation, has changed the MIO into the Maritime Security Operations (MSO) for building a maritime environment that is safe and stable. The operations do not dovetail with the government's explanation.

A refueling operation at sea that ignores the ever-changing situation brings back memories of Japan's checkbook diplomacy during the 1991 Gulf War, when the government provided 3 billion dollars. Fuel from oilers from the United States and Britain does not come free. A Defense Ministry source has indicated that the government is not considering switching the refueling operation to paid services at this point in time.

(3) SDF possesses large armaments for overseas missions, including 200-billion-yen helicopter carrier

AKAHATA (Page 3) (Abridged slightly)  
August 20, 2008

The August 23, 2007, launching ceremony of the Hyuga, a Maritime Self-Defense Force helicopter destroyer, made the August 30, 2007, issue of the Asagumo, the Defense Ministry and Self-Defense Forces newsletter. The newsletter also described the 13,500-ton, 197-meter-long destroyer as one of the largest vessels the MSDF has.

Bearing a close resemblance to an aircraft carrier, the Hyuga is comparable to the British aircraft carrier Invincible (209 meters) and Italia's Giuseppe Garibaldi (180 meters) in size. The destroyer is capable of carrying up to 11 helicopters.

The procurement of the Hyuga was determined in 2003 by the then Defense Agency. The agency cited the need to flexibly carry out overseas missions, such as long-term support for the U.S. military

in the Indian Ocean, as the reason for building large vessels.

The Hyuga cost 105.7 billion yen. The ministry has begun building another Hyuga-class destroyer for 97.5 billion yen.

The MSDF also has large refuelers comparable to the Hyuga: the Mashu  
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and Oumi (both 13,500 tons in displacement and 221 meters in length).

The two vessels have repeatedly been dispatched to the Indian Ocean to provide naval vessels of the United States and other countries in the Indian Ocean with fuel and water free of charge. One Indian Ocean tour lasts five to six months. The Mashu has made three tours since it was commissioned in March 2004 and the Oumi two tours since March 2005. It is not an exaggeration to say that they were commissioned for refueling operations in the Indian Ocean.

It cost the country 85.5 billion yen to build the two refuelers that have been ridiculed as free gas stations in the Indian Ocean.

Besides those vessels, the MSDF possesses three 8,900-ton, 178-meter transport vessels -- Osumi, Shimokita, and Kunisaki -- that sea-lifted vehicles and supplies to Iraq for the Ground Self-Defense Force.

Building the three vessels cost 115.4 billion yen. The construction cost of five vessels, including the two large oilers, ran up to 290 billion yen.

The government once declared that it would not possess any air tankers. Reversing its policy course, the government has now decided to introduce five KC-767 air tankers. It has already concluded contracts on four air tankers for 89.2 billion yen.

Air tankers are designed to refuel fighters and other aircrafts in the air. They make it possible for fighters to fly further and attack other countries. Equipped with transport functions to be used in international cooperation activities, the government also envisages using the KC-767 as aircraft for transporting troops overseas.

The cost of building four P1 next-generation patrol planes for the MSDF was incorporated for the first time in the fiscal 2008 budget with the aim of enhancing the country's overseas deployment capability. The government has decided to introduce a total of 65 P1 next-generation patrol aircraft. The government is also trying to introduce next-generation transport planes sharing some frame structures with the P1 for the ASDF in the name of international cooperative duties.

Nevertheless, it is undeniable that the SDF's international peace activities are on the decline with the failure of the Bush administration's preemptive strike strategy.

In the face of growing national opinion opposing the MSDF's refueling mission in the Indian Ocean, some in the ruling bloc think the new antiterrorism law, the legal basis for the refueling operation, must not be extended beyond next January. The UN resolution backing the ASDF's Iraq airlift mission is also scheduled to expire at the end of this year. The government is desperately trying to find new overseas missions, such as one in Sudan, but there is a huge inconsistency between its intentions on the one hand and the Constitution and popular will on the other.

Major armaments for overseas deployment and their procurement costs

Helicopter carriers  
(Destroyers carrying helicopters)

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Hyuga 105.7 billion yen  
Hyuga-class second helicopter carrier

97.5 billion yen  
Total 203.2 billion yen

Large refuelers  
Mashu 45.3 billion yen  
Oumi 40.2 billion yen  
Total 85.5 billion yen

Large transport vessels  
Osumi 45 billion yen  
Shimokita 35.3 billion yen  
Kunisaki 35.1 billion yen  
Total 115.4 billion yen

KC-767 air tankers  
No.1 KC-767 22.3 billion yen  
No.2 21.1 billion yen  
No.3 22.3 billion yen  
No.4 23.5 billion yen  
Total 89.2 billion yen

P1 next-general patrol aircraft  
Four aircraft 92.4 billion yen

(4) SDF dispatch (Part 2): Permanent legislation fades out in changing political situation

MAINICHI (Page 5) (Full)  
August 20, 2008

Last fall, the political world was shaken in an uproar over the initiative to form a "grand coalition" of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party and the leading opposition Democratic Party of Japan (Minshuto). If the LDP and the DPJ had been allied, the Diet could have enacted a permanent law allowing Japan to send the Self-Defense Forces overseas as needed.

"If you're ready to discuss this permanent legislation in our talks for a coalition government (of the LDP and the DPJ), then we will cooperate to pass the bill for a new antiterrorism special measures law to resume the (Maritime Self-Defense Force's) refueling activities in the Indian Ocean." DPJ President Ichiro Ozawa made this overture to Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda. This offer from Ozawa touched off the uproar. At the time, Fukuda was in a fix as the MSDF's refueling mission in the Indian Ocean was soon to be terminated under a time-limited special measures law. Fukuda could therefore find a way out of the difficulties. Moreover, it was also possible to devise a plan for Japan to make still greater contributions in the international community. Ozawa's proposal was more attractive than killing two birds with one stone.

At the time of the 1990 Gulf crisis, Japan was called on to make international contributions. Ozawa, as the then LDP secretary general, worked out a legislative measure (scrapped later) for a de facto permanent law allowing Japan to send SDF troops overseas in conformity with a United Nations resolution. The government faced difficulties in sending SDF troops to Iraq. Meanwhile, Fukuda also pushed for creating a permanent law when he was chief cabinet secretary.

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It takes time to create and enact a law for special measures each time Japan sends SDF troops to such countries as Afghanistan and Iraq. Moreover, the outcome of such legislative measures can be easily affected by the political situation. The permanent law is to list general guidelines for Japan to send SDF personnel overseas, and it is also to show a menu of activities for SDF personnel to be sent overseas. This law will allow Japan to send SDF personnel overseas as needed if the Diet approves the government's masterplan for SDF missions.

There are differences between the Gulf and Iraq wars. However, both Fukuda and Ozawa had a hard time of it over the SDF's overseas dispatch. The two were once about to join hands for the permanent legislation.

It was also Ozawa who refused to do so. The initiative to form an LDP-DPJ grand coalition drew unexpected negative reactions from within the DPJ. In point of fact, Ozawa took back the initiative. Ozawa then shifted his goal from the grand coalition initiative to a change of government in an election. "We can agree with the DPJ's defense policy clique, but the DPJ's leadership is quite hard to persuade," one LDP executive lamented.

Ozawa has now made an about-face while taking it as a change of course in the political situation. In the meantime, Fukuda was still hanging on to the permanent legislation. "I want to work out a bill during the ordinary Diet session," Fukuda said in March this year. He wanted another chance to talk with the DPJ. However, Ozawa was cold on Fukuda.

Meanwhile, the New Komeito-the LDP's coalition partner-was concerned about a potential general election for the House of Representatives. In June, the LDP and the New Komeito hit snags in their talks. Fukuda is now saying almost nothing about the permanent legislation. The top leaders of the two parties once tried to break the political deadlock with the permanent legislation-which, ironically enough, is now far from being realized in the changing political situation.

SCHIEFFER